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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR SFO
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
USUN FOR TMALY
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

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SUBJECT: SUDAN - U/SYG HOLMES BRIEFS DONOR COMMUNITY ON RECENT TRIP
TO SUDAN

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Summary

1. (U) On March 26, U.N. Under Secretary General (U/SYG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes briefed the donor community on his trip to Sudan, which included visits to Juba and Darfur and meetings with various government officials. Holmes voiced concern over the impact of increasing insecurity and continuing Sudanese government bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian operations that are collectively hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid in Darfur. In addition, Holmes highlighted the lack of protection and vulnerability of the Darfur civilian population to acts of violence and attacks by armed groups. Holmes briefly discussed the Southern Sudan leg of his trip noting the impressive will of the population to rebuild and underlining the U.N.'s continued focus on the rehabilitation of the region.

2. (U) The U/SYG reported that the U.N.'s efforts to set up an Oversight Committee with the Government of National Unity (GNU) to address ongoing bureaucratic impediments are currently stalled due to Sudanese government objections to donor participation. Chargé d'Affaires (CDA) Hume emphasized the United States Government (USG) interest in results, regardless of the mechanism and composition of the committee. End summary.

Situation on the Ground

3. (U) U/SYG Holmes acknowledged that the humanitarian effort in Darfur has been successful in stabilizing conditions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and in addressing the basic needs of IDPs. However, insecurity continues to hinder humanitarian access to displaced populations, and jeopardizes the safety of U.N. and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff, placing the entire humanitarian effort at risk.

4. (U) U/SYG Holmes identified the growing militarization of IDP camps as the most alarming impression of his visit. Armed groups increasingly control camps, characterized by the growing prevalence of weapons inside IDP camps. During his trip, the Sudanese government prevented U/SYG Holmes from visiting Kassab camp in

Kutum, North Darfur, although later apologized, citing a breakdown in communication for the denied access. Holmes also visited Jebel Marra, controlled by the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur, where he was greeted by crowds who predominantly support the U.N. and the humanitarian effort. U/SYG Holmes noted the need for improved access to services in the area.

Meeting with Government Ministers

15. (U) U/SYG Holmes relayed that in a meeting with the GNU Second Vice President Taha, Taha had expressed the government's appreciation for the work of the international community and its willingness to assist in resolving current obstacles, but had emphasized the need for NGOs to obey government regulations. Holmes identified the Sudanese government's failure to issue travel and work permits, breaches of the U.N. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and the introduction of new NGO legislation as significant obstacles to NGO operations. Holmes further encouraged the government not to determine the quality of NGOs based on their level of engagement in protection or advocacy work, but indicated that protection is a part of the humanitarian package and should be treated as such.

16. (U) Holmes also met with Senior Assistant to the President of the GNU and SLM faction leader Minni Minawi and discussed the Gereida situation, noting that recent events in Gereida, including the March 5 attack on African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) troops, were damaging the morale of the humanitarian community. Minawi conveyed to Holmes that SLM/Minawi had investigated the situation and that initial findings indicated that some of those involved may have defected from his movement. Holmes viewed GNU First Vice President Salva Kiir's efforts to bring the non-signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement together as the one positive development in the current Darfur environment.

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17. (U) Holmes also reported on U.N. efforts to establish an Oversight Committee with the GNU to address bureaucratic impediments. Holmes noted that discussions on the Oversight Committee were stalled due to Sudanese government objections to donor participation, which have raised significant concerns among U.N. agencies and NGOs operating in Sudan. In response, CDA emphasized USG interest in results, regardless of the mechanism and composition of the committee, stating that the USG would not insist on participating.

HUME